

The Observer

foodmonthly

August 2022 № 255



Restaurants special!

From Moro and the River Cafe
to the Selby brothers,
Britain's best young chefs

A life's work
Jeremy Lee recipes

Chefs' favourites
Where cooks eat

Anita Rani
Mum will feed you now

EVERY CLOUD
has a delicious lining.



THE *cloudy* G & T

Please tell me
more about
COTSWOLDS
DRY GIN
AND THE
CLOUDY G&T



AVAILABLE FROM: OCADO, SAINSBURY'S, TESCO, WAITROSE & COTSWOLDSDISTILLERY.COM



Contents

August



A master chef

Recipes from the long-awaited cookbook by Jeremy Lee of Quo Vadis: sardines on toast, hake with parsley, dill and anchovy sauce, apple tarts page 8

Big brothers

Meet Luke, Nat and Theo Selby, the young Michelin stars page 16

Britain's best new places to eat

Top chefs on their discoveries page 22

Easy does it

Fish tagine, roast chicken and wild rice, chocolate almond cake ... just some of the simple, delicious dishes in Moro's new cookbook page 30

Cafe society

It's 35 years old next month and as influential as ever. We meet three River Cafe alumni who now run their own restaurants page 36



Photograph
Perou



Nigel Slater

This month we celebrate restaurants new and old with Evelyn's Table and the River Cafe

Regulars

Jay Rayner

Musicians aren't just there for entertainment. They need their dinner, too page 5

Secret ingredient

The Cinnamon Club's Vivek Singh celebrates "nutty, nutritious" sattu page 5

Life on a plate

"Food is life," says broadcaster Anita Rani page 6

Rachel Cooke

When it comes to having people round, practise the gentle art of imperfection page 42

Welcome to the restaurants issue. Our cover stars are the remarkable Selby brothers, the chefs at Evelyn's Table, a 12-seat counter in the cellar of the famous Soho watering hole The Blue Posts. Now that word of their cooking has spread, booking a seat means you must be quick on the draw but you will be rewarded with not only extraordinary and original food but the chance to watch Luke, Nat and Theo in action.

From the new kids on the block to a restaurant icon. The River Cafe is 35 years old this month. We interview three of its alumni – Anna Tobias, Avinash Shashidhara and Pegs Quinn – who tell us of the lasting effect working there has had on their own restaurants.

One learns which influencers and restaurant critics to trust and which to ignore, but it is also good to have a recommendation from someone who spends time behind the stoves

themselves. With this in mind we ask top chefs to tell us where they've been eating recently and, more specifically, places that are new on the map. Their suggestions run from oysters with buttermilk and elderberry in a bothy overlooking Loch Nell to red cabbage gazpacho above a jeweller's shop in Lichfield.

Few cookbooks have been longer in the works than that of the much-loved chef Jeremy Lee. He has been teasing us with the idea that he was putting his recipes on the page for years, but good things are worth waiting for and OFM has a sneak peek of his new book, *Cooking – Simply And Well, For One or Many*. We have his recipe for hake with parsley and dill sauce, his signature anchovy toasts and a perfect puff pastry apple tart for you. As if that wasn't enough, there is an interview with Sam and Sam Clark and recipes from their first new book in almost a decade, *Moro Easy*.

Life on a Plate is with broadcaster Anita Rani, and Jay Rayner makes a plea to restaurateurs to remember to feed the piano player. **OFM**



MAKE IT SUPER SURPRISING



Bring flavour and colour to meals that might surprise you with our sweet and juicy British grown beetroot. Pickled using our family recipe.

It's super vibrant, super healthy and super delicious.

JUST ADD





The Happy Eater Jay Rayner

In the gig economy, he who pays the piper, or the pianist, should feed them too

The online world can be a scary place. For me, one of the internet's most dismaying corners is a members-only forum on Facebook called Sandwiches. It's a portmanteau word, the crashing together of "band" and "sandwiches", coined by the saxophonist Stan Harrison after a particularly dismal experience. It celebrates or, to be more exact, bemoans the grim quality of so much of the food offered to musicians on gigs in UK hospitality settings. Here are numerous shots of terrible, cold mini sausage rolls the colour of yesterday's porridge. There's a meagre plate of biscuits alongside some orange juice with a handwritten note saying: "Out of date. Help yourself at your own peril." There are polystyrene boxes filled with a tiny number of indeterminate deep-fried things. And, of course, lots and lots of terrible, floppy sandwiches made with the pappiest of pappy white bread. It's all so damn beige. And the portions! So small!

This could be dismissed as the nicest of niche problems. Then again, the Sandwiches Facebook group has 4,300 members. That's a significant slab of the UK's gigging musicians. And even if it is a side issue, it's my side issue. I am both a jazz musician and a journalist who writes about food. If I don't complain about this, who the hell will? People in the hospitality industry do their jobs around meal times. For many years the meals offered both to waiters and kitchen staff was a major issue. Too many restaurants simply

didn't seem to care. Happily, that is generally no longer the case (although there are still exceptions). Musicians, the ones who work in bars and restaurants, hotels and events such as weddings, are too often the forgotten hospitality workers.

There are good stories. Let's hear it for the Pig Hotel and the magnificent spread they laid on recently for the Jools Holland Big Band. I know from experience that dedicated London music venues such as Brasserie Zedel, Boisdale and Ronnie Scott's look after



For the musicians, it's cold mini sausage rolls the colour of yesterday's porridge

Illustration
Sarah Tanat-Jones

their performers. But there are so many other truly lousy stories. The worst offenders are often at the very top end. A pianist pal recently played a four-hour solo piano wedding gig at one of the most garlanded and expensive hotel restaurants in the country. (I wish I could name and shame, but lawyers get twitchy.) His lunch: a single, clingfilm-wrapped sandwich.

Another musician posted an image of an empty table at a significant London restaurant world event. They'd offered him precisely nothing. Then there are the horror stories from weddings, especially if you have the audacity to be, say, a non-meat eater. At best it can be a case of: you can have a go at the buffet but only once everyone else has finished at 11pm. As one musician put it: "We cost less than the flowers, but we're the thing your guests will remember. Show us a little respect."

We've all heard of the gig economy, with the implied issues of chronic job insecurity. Musicians know all about the gig economy, because that's what being a musician is. It means that complaining about shoddy treatment is tough because they need the work. Hence, I'm complaining for them. Please god, let's abandon sandwiches. Away with the beige. Offer a hot meal. In short, if you are booking musicians for an event don't forget to feed the piper. And the guitarist. And the pianist and the rest. They are there to bring your guests significant pleasure; don't make their lives a misery. After all, it's called the hospitality business. That means being hospitable to everyone. **OFM**
jay.rayner@observer.co.uk



My secret ingredient

Vivek Singh's sattu



When my father lived away from home, he would often completely live on sattu (roasted chickpea flour), partly because it travels well and because he didn't have much else. In the morning, he made

lassi or smoothies with it, just adding water or yoghurt. In the afternoon, he kneaded it into a dough.

There was more cooking involved in the evening; the sattu was seasoned with onion, chillies and

the oil from the pickle – this makes a very nice spicy filling that goes inside a dough ball called *litti chokha*. It's my heritage dish. It's sold on the street in Varanasi, Patna, in fact most of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Traditionally they are cooked on the burning embers of cowpats.

For anyone who has had chickpea flour, sattu tastes more roasted and nutty. It is considered very nutritious, a good source of protein.

For beginners, use it in a dry chutney and eat it with rice, lentils and whatever else you are cooking, or as a filling for paratha. **Vivek Singh** is the founder of the Cinnamon Collection restaurants

Interview
Tim Lewis

Photograph
Alex Lake

My life on a plate

Anita Rani
Broadcaster, 44

Food is life, in all its forms. Everything in my world, in my Indian culture, revolves around food. So when the family gets together, it's like an army assault: women plan the food like an attack. They're going to go in with a starter to ease you in and then just loads and loads of food. And if you haven't been annihilated by the end of the main course, the dessert will definitely finish you off.

The rule of thumb for TV is shit food, sadly. If I'm on the road with *Countryfile*, you eat what's available. Thank God for Waitrose and Marks & Spencer at service stations. A lot of people working in telly will be nodding along to that.

If you came round tomorrow, my mum would sit you down and cook you a meal. My mum and dad's next-door neighbours had builders in and my mum cooked them pakora – so not even for their builders. Food is not something that is scrimped or saved or kept to yourself. You're opening your heart to people when you share your food.

I don't believe in dieting. I believe in making your own food, eating a balanced meal, and regular exercise – that's it. Maybe I'm lucky, maybe one day I'll wake up with a circumference and think: "Shit! Better lay off the salt and vinegar Chipsticks!"

Growing up in Bradford in the 1980s, my Indian life and my out-of-home life were two very different worlds. Often,

when they collided, there was never a good result for me. Once, at an ice-cream van, kids I played with every day saw me in Indian clothes for the first time. One said: "We didn't think you were one of those." It was a complicated time. But there was a big turnaround moment for me on the platinum jubilee, where I wore a sari to present for the first time. So that story has a nice little ending.

When you'd go to birthday parties of your English friends as a kid, your mum would feed you before you'd go because you'd know you wouldn't get fed that much. A sandwich ain't gonna cut it! This is something a lot of non-white kids growing up in Britain knew.

Rani's Recipes was a moment. It was the first day we went into lockdown and I went to the cash and carry and bought a box of tinned chickpeas. And I remember saying to my husband: "Better tell the world what to do with a tin of chickpeas!" So I just cooked basic chickpea curry, and it went down a storm [on Instagram]. I can't sit still, literally, so yeah, Rani's Recipes, dancing around in my kitchen. People are still asking me when I'm going to resurrect it.

I spent lockdown writing my memoir and I wrote this line: "Food is conjuring up the past." I'm still cooking the same recipes that have been passed down from my great grandmother, my great-great grandmother. And that's just absolutely magic. **OFM**

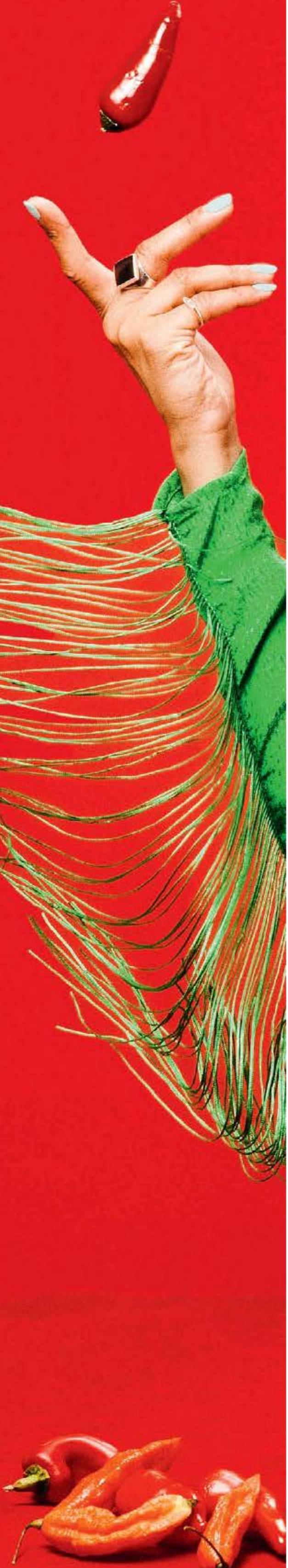
My favourite things

Food
It's got to be curry. Just give me rajma, a really good traditional Punjabi kidney bean curry.

Drink
Tequila is my jam at the minute. You can have it on ice with a bit of jalapeno and some lime juice. Hell yeah!

Place to eat
I absolutely love Luca in London. I like places where you really can relax and sink into and get quite raucous. And that's there.

Anita Rani's memoir, *The Right Sort of Girl*, is out now in paperback (Blink, £9.99)







'It's a great adventure'

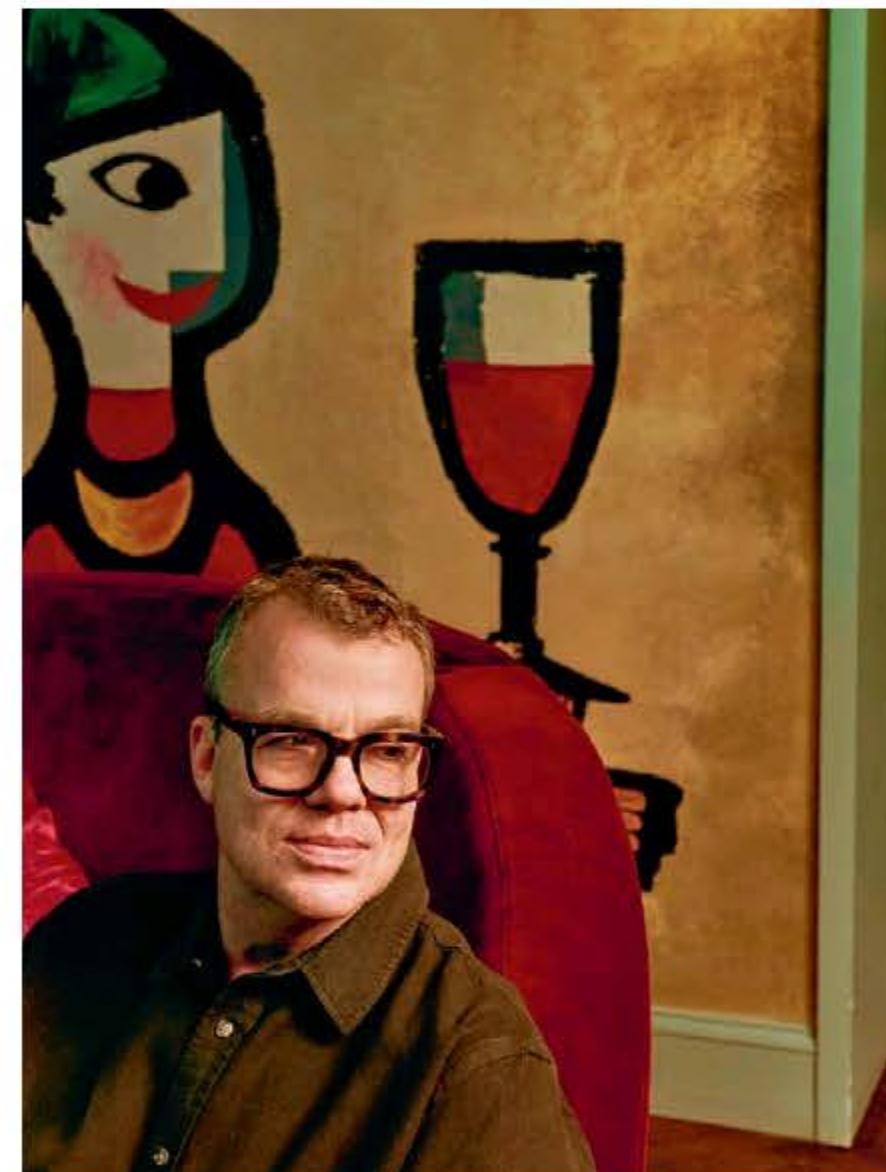
Our restaurants special issue starts with a remarkable life's work - the long-awaited cookbook from Jeremy Lee of Quo Vadis

Interview
Holly O'Neill

When Jeremy Lee received the very first copy of his new cookbook from his publishers, he immediately threw it in a drawer, then cycled from his home in east London to get on with his day at Soho's Quo Vadis, where he is chef-patron. The book, *Cooking: Simply And Well, For One or Many*, was the result of many years of work, on and off, and he wasn't quite ready to face its reality.

Loved by the London food world since making his mark at Terence Conran's Blueprint Cafe, it seems like an oversight that Lee has not published a cookbook until now. "I had shied away, I suppose, mostly because I thought it had all been done. God knows that this kind of thing is standing on the shoulders of the great and the many," he says, gesturing to the shelves on all walls of his home. They're filled with books about food, from nouvelle cuisine pioneer Michel Guérard to current London pastry sensation Ravneet Gill. And of course, the holy trinity of Elizabeth David, Julia Child and Jane Grigson. But Lee had long felt a volume of his own work may be simmering away, and when approached by Fourth Estate in about 2016 he knew it was time to make it real, eventually.

"It's been a great adventure, but I underestimated entirely what



Portrait
Phil Fisk

Jeremy Lee, photographed for OFM at Quo Vadis

it would take," he admits. The pressures of writing daily menus and working in a busy kitchen meant that structuring a whole book seemed overwhelming.

The book is arranged with a chef's eye for ingredients, and favourite things to eat throughout the seasons, rather than in courses or meals. A chapter on blood oranges sits between Biscuits and Breadcrumbs, while Impromptu Dinners provides meals (such

as a perfect pork chop and pan juices) that can be made for one or scaled up; and there are simple, joyous meals to feed a crowd (little meatballs, or fennel and lemon spaghetti).

It's also a journey through Lee's career, from his signature snack of baked salsify, back to a classic pommes anna from his time at the London club Boodles, as well as a tribute to peers, mentors and his food-loving parents, who would think nothing of driving across Scotland for hours to pick up a good lobster. "We only liked food folk," he says. "If you weren't eating it, you were talking about it."

Lee is as generous in prose as he is when talking about the book, heaping praise on the close team who helped bring it all together. Lee and friends shot the photographs for the book at his home, for a true reflection of his cooking – the chocolate tart is a little spilled, the pastry a little blond, the plates and cookware his own. "It's all very real," he says. "We're keen on that."

Some favourite recipes were lost to the editing process. Mince and tatties did not make the cut. He wonders if calling it "Scottish ragu" would have improved its chances of making the final version and if, perhaps, it could go in a second book. "We'll see how this darling does. It's all a bit nerve-racking," says Lee, breezily. "The adventure continues." >>



*Sardines on
toast with
a fried egg,
see page 11*



AN ITALIAN BEER
MADE FOR THE TABLE
THIS SUMMER



VALGANNA ITALIA 1877

 @BIRRIFICIOPORETTIUK

Born in Italy and brewed in the UK

Enjoy Responsibly
bedrinkaware.co.uk

**EXCLUSIVE
RECIPES**

Sardines on toast with a fried egg

Worth considering too for this charming dish are mackerel and herring, cooked similarly.

For each person

spring onions 3, trimmed
bread 1 slice
butter
olive oil 1 tsp
fresh sardines 3, butterflied
split and flattened)
organic egg 1

► Directions

Heat a griddle or frying pan over a high heat. Lay the spring onions on the hot pan to blister, turning after 3-4 minutes to blister the other side.

TOAST
Toast the bread and chop the cooked spring onions finely. Butter the toast and spread with the chopped spring onions.

Lightly oil and season the skin side of the sardines, then lay them in the onion pan, skin side down, and cook undisturbed for 3-4 minutes, until the flesh turns pale. Flip and cook for no more than 1 minute on the other side.

Heat a small frying pan and gently fry the egg. Carefully lift the sardines and set them skin side up on the onion, then place the egg on the sardines – *et voila*.

Pork chop

For each person

pork chop 1 x 300-400g,
preferably on the bone
light vegetable oil 1 tsp
garlic 1/2 clove, peeled and
finely chopped
unwaxed lemon zest of 1/2
thyme leaves a pinch
rosemary 2-3 sprigs
fennel seeds and celery seeds
a pinch of each
very good red wine vinegar 1 tsp
(such as Banyuls)

► Directions

Heat a cast-iron frying pan over a moderate heat. Liberally and evenly pepper the pork chop on both sides



ELENA HEATHERWICK

**Cook the chop
undisturbed
until deep
mahogany
in colour**

and lightly season with sea salt. Put the oil into the cast-iron pan, lay the pork chop on top and let cook undisturbed until deep mahogany in colour, roughly 8-10 minutes.

While the pork chop is cooking, grind the garlic, lemon zest, thyme and rosemary with the fennel and celery seeds in a pestle and mortar and set aside.

Turn the pork chop and cook for a further 2-3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and spoon the contents of the mortar on to the

chop. Discard any excess fat from the pan, pour the red wine vinegar on to the chop, and turn it a few times to make sure it's evenly coated. Cover and set aside to rest in the pan for at least 3-4 minutes.

Gently warm the pan to heat up any juices gathered, to pour over the pork chop before serving. The chop goes wonderfully with olive oil, mash or potato and celeriac gratin, green beans, asparagus, peas, courgettes, Jerusalem artichokes or chicory.



Hake with parsley, dill and anchovy sauce

A striking dish with the pale green sauce pooled in the plate, contrasting with the delicate silvered skin of the hake.

Feeds 6

shallots 3 small
garlic 1 clove
anchovy fillets 6
olive oil 7 tbsp
double cream 200ml
flat-leaf parsley 150g picked leaves
dill 30g picked leaves
hake 6 fillets, roughly 1kg in total

► Directions

Preheat the oven to 180C fan/gas mark 6.

Peel and finely chop the shallots and garlic. Place in a pan with the anchovies and olive oil. Sit this upon the gentlest heat and warm until the shallots have softened and the anchovies have melted.

Pour in the cream. Bring to a simmer, then pour into a blender packed with the picked herbs. Render smooth and pour this through a fine sieve. Cool swiftly and refrigerate until required.

Place the fillets of hake in a deep ovenproof dish, lightly season with salt and white pepper and lightly dress with a soup spoon of olive oil. Pour in enough cold water to cover the bottom of the dish.

Cover the dish and bake in the hot oven until done, say 15-20 minutes. Remove from the oven and keep warm. Any residual juices left in the dish can be added to the sauce.

Warm the sauce and pour on to a dish. Place the fillets of hake on the sauce and serve swiftly. Heaven with the first crop of new potatoes.

Below, hake with parsley, dill and anchovy sauce

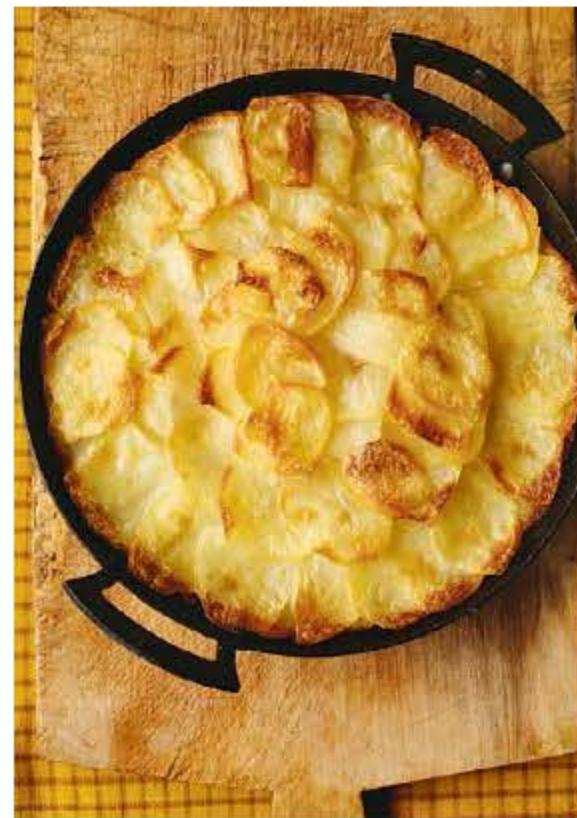


Pommes anna

The anna makes a splendid cake, perfect when cut into wedges and served with cuts of beef such as bavette, onglet, rump and loin, or fillet of lamb, hogget, mutton, pork and venison, and, of course, it goes very well with roast chicken.

I have often thought about a copper mould for making this lovely dish, as pleasing to look at as it is to eat. A wider, shallower cake shaped and cooked in a cast-iron skillet or frying pan is as delicious as those cooked in hatted moulds.

The sliced potatoes require clarified butter, which is easy enough to make. Melt some butter



Above, pommes anna

in a saucepan over a moderate heat and spoon away any foam or whey that rises. Carefully ladle the butter through muslin into a bowl, leaving behind the white solids.

Mayan gold and yukon gold potatoes cook a treat in this recipe, king edwards work very well, and good results were also enjoyed with baking and roasting potatoes.

Feeds 6

potatoes 2kg, such as yukon gold, mayan gold or king edward
unsalted butter 200g, clarified and kept warm

► Directions

Put a baking sheet in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 200C fan/gas mark 7.

Peel the potatoes and slice thinly (a mandoline makes short work of this).

Place a 25cm cast-iron skillet over a gentle heat. Pour in a small ladle of clarified butter. Place a potato slice in the centre of the skillet and lay the rest of the slices around, overlapping. Continue thus until reaching the edge. Pour over a little more clarified butter and season evenly. Repeat with another layer of potato, continuing thus, adding butter, salt and black pepper as you go. Cover with a sheet of foil and place a lid on top.

Place on the baking sheet in the oven and bake for 45 minutes. Lift the lid and remove the foil. Press the cake down lightly with the bottom of a frying pan, then cook for a further 30 minutes, until the edges of the cake have coloured deep gold.

Insert a small knife into the cake for doneness; there should be no resistance. Remove the cake from the oven, press down lightly with a frying pan one last time, then let sit for 5 minutes.

Carefully work a spatula round the edges, lifting slightly to loosen the cake. Work the spatula gently towards the centre to free any slices that are sticking. Shake the pan gently to see if the cake shifts free. Place a board or dish on top. With one swift move, invert. Tap the bottom of the skillet. Lift the skillet away and serve.



**Claire is taking
action for climate
with a home
EV charger**

e-on

**We're helping more
and more people do their bit.**

eonenergy.com



Above,
apple tarts

Apple tarts

This is a lovely pudding, timeless, elegant and delicious, and simplicity itself.

For each person
rough puff pastry 50g (see below)
apple 1, such as egremont russet, cox's orange pippin or jonagold

lemon juice a squeeze
unsalted butter 15g, melted
caster sugar ½tsp

For the rough puff pastry
plain flour 500g, plus extra for dusting
unsalted butter 500g, cold, cut into small squares
salt a big pinch
cold water 250ml

Bake until slightly risen and golden. Serve with very good cream

► Directions

To make the rough puff pastry, sift the flour on to a wide surface or into a large bowl. Add the cold butter and salt, then, using your fingertips, work the butter into the flour until it resembles coarse crumbs. Slowly add the water, about 50ml at a time, working deftly until all the water has been added. The dough will not be even but shape it into a rough ball, cover and refrigerate for 20 minutes.

Lightly flour the surface and roll the ball into a rectangle, about 40cm x 20cm. Fold this in three and turn 90 degrees. Roll into the same sized rectangle again and fold in three. Cover and refrigerate for 20 minutes. Repeat this two more times, turning each folded rectangle 90 degrees. Chill the pastry for an hour, or overnight, or freeze for future use.

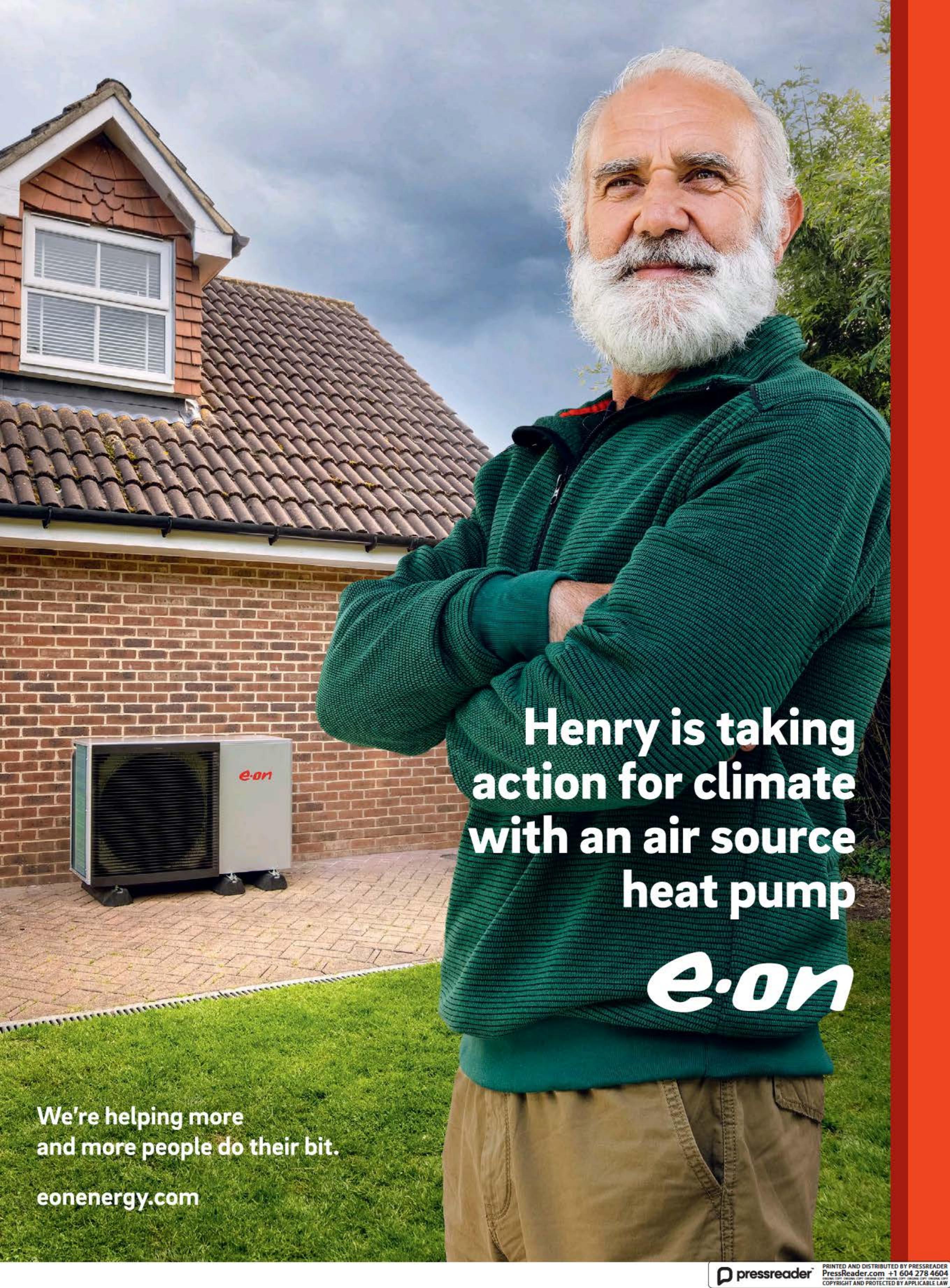
Preheat the oven to 180C fan/gas mark 6.

Take a 50g portion of the pastry and roll it out thinly on a lightly floured surface into a 12-13cm disc. Place on a baking sheet and prick with a fork. Refrigerate.

Peel and core the apple, halve it, slice the halves thinly and toss in lemon juice. Lay these concentrically and fairly evenly over the pastry. Brush the apple with melted butter. Evenly sugar the apple slices.

Bake in the hot oven for 25 minutes until slightly risen and golden. Serve with very good cream. **OFM**

Recipes from Cooking: Simply And Well, For One or Many by Jeremy Lee (4th Estate, £30), published on 1 September. To order a copy for £26.10 go to guardianbookshop.com



**Henry is taking
action for climate
with an air source
heat pump**

e.on

We're helping more
and more people do their bit.

eonenergy.com





Words
Tim Adams

Portraits
Perou

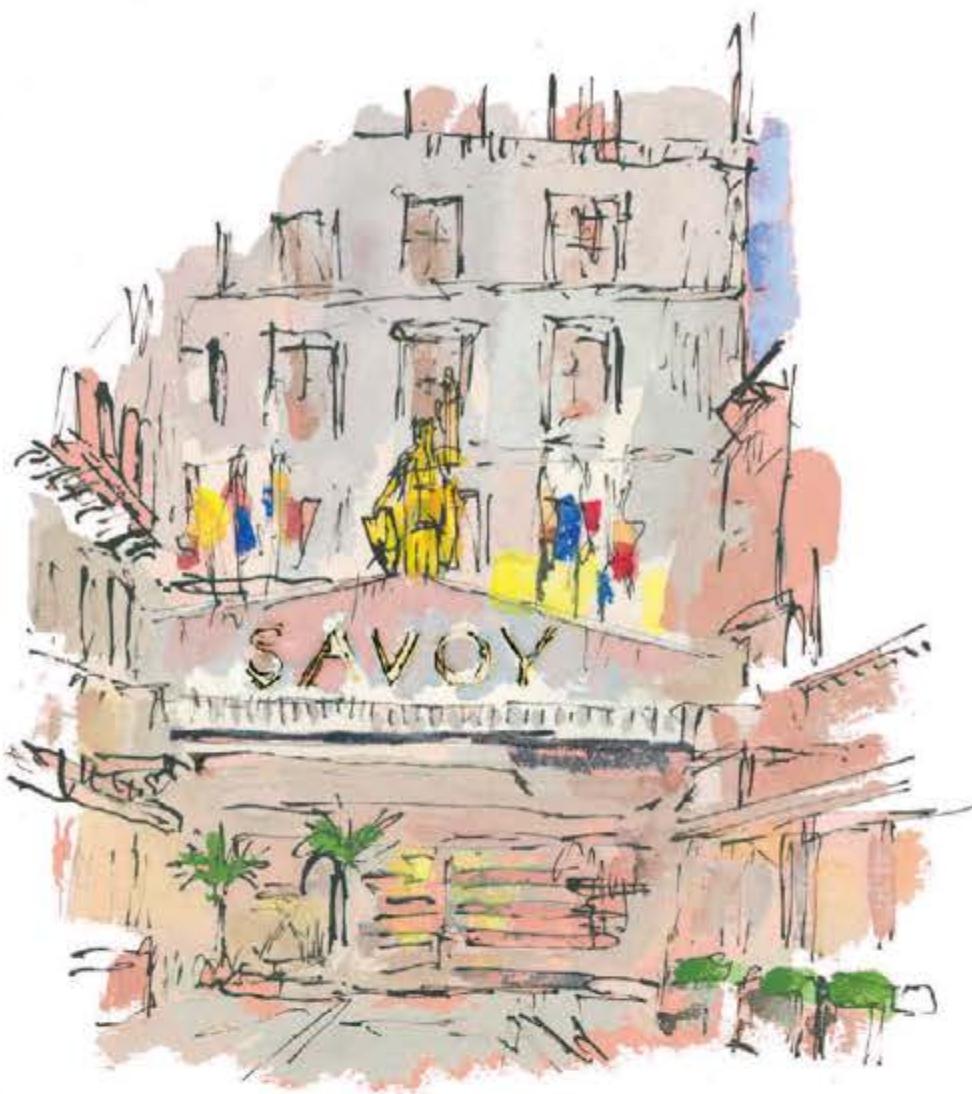
The fabulous, flying Selby brothers

They're the sibling chefs behind the hottest restaurant in London. The secret of their success? Their mum

At noon on the first of every month, a slightly frenzied ritual takes place among some of London's more deep-pocketed foodies. It is the time when bookings open for the following four weeks at Evelyn's Table. Punters time their midday calls with all the desperation of theatregoers trying to secure a ticket for *Jerusalem*, or hypochondriacs hoping to bag a GP appointment. The restaurant accommodates just 12 people at two sittings, Tuesday to Saturday evening. All slots – eight couples, two groups of four per night – are invariably gone by 12.05.

The experience rewards that fastest-finger competitiveness. Evelyn's Table is in the former beer cellar of a storied Soho boozer, the Blue Posts, in a side street near Chinatown. At your appointed time – our sitting was at 6pm – you pass through a velvet curtain at the back of the old snug and descend a steep staircase into a narrow room with a steel-topped bar. Seated ➤

*From left:
Nathaniel, Theo
and Luke Selby*



Illustrated by Quentin Blake

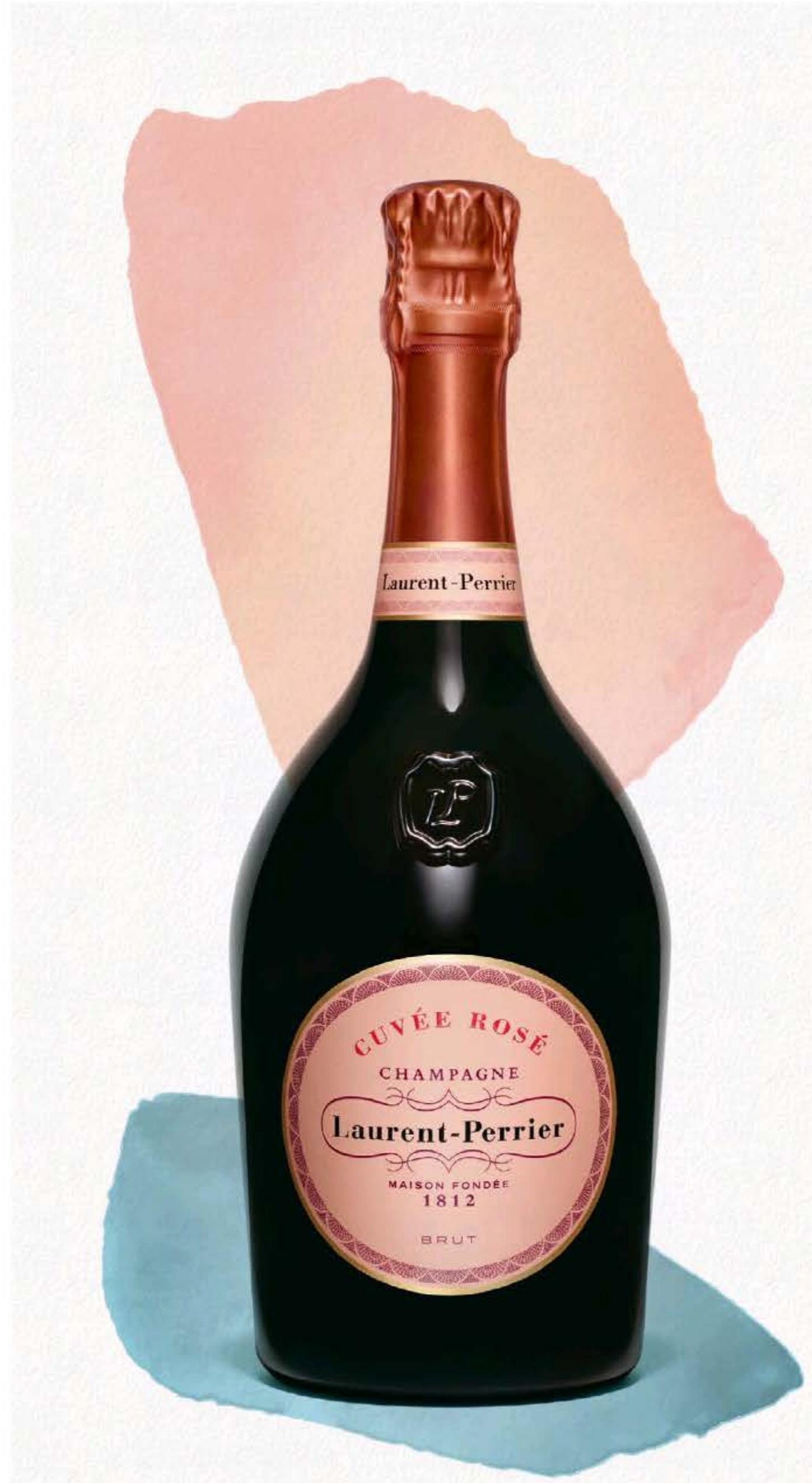
The Savoy, London



MAISON FAMILIALE INDÉPENDANTE

Laurent-Perrier

Cuvée Rosé, chosen by the best.



© champagnelaurentperrier www.laurent-perrier.com

Photo credit: Iris Velghe / Illustration credit: Quentin Blake / Conception Luma

be **drinkaware**.co.uk

on high stools you are then within touching distance of a performance that seems part theatre, part magic show. Three intense young brothers, black-haired, bearded, all chefs, are already at dexterous work in a spotless and spotlit galley kitchen; on the night we took our seats the trio were noiselessly conjuring a dish of freshly opened, hand-dived scallops, tweezing on garnish, pipetting drops of tomato essence. Watching them perform, you are reminded a little of those families of circus acrobats, each outdoing the next in their tumbles. Here come the high-flying Selbys, Luke and Nathaniel and Theo! Roll up! Roll up! And be amazed!

Their tasting menu consists of five courses – with a couple of extra surprises thrown in. One seasonal high-wire act follows the next. The freshest Cornish mackerel comes with horseradish ice-cream and a tangy gooseberry puree; a rack of lamb is roasted before your eyes on a mini-barbecue of fragrant hay. There are no waiting staff: dishes are passed over the counter and placed before you, and described precisely by the sibling responsible. More expansive biodynamic storytelling is offered by maître d' Aidan Monk, who spins seductive fables about wine pairings drawn from obsessive small vineyards in Georgia and Mendocino and Stellenbosch. The two-hour meal is about as expensive as box seats at the National Theatre or Wembley, but still, it defies you not to believe it is one-off worth it.

The day after I've watched the Selbys in action, I meet them at three in the afternoon on the upper floor of the Blue Posts at the wine bar, the Mulwray (it is named, like the basement restaurant, after Evelyn Mulwray, Faye Dunaway's mysterious socialite in Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, famed for finding secret corners of her city where she can be fully herself). Having finished the previous night at midnight, the brothers have been prepping for four hours already and, though patient with my questions, are clearly slightly anxious to get back to it (if they don't do it, as Theo, the youngest points out, no one else will).

They operate without juniors (one of the fascinations of the previous evening had been watching the choreography of them scrubbing the steel of the hob and surfaces back to stainless between courses and at the end of the service). They talk, like all close brothers, in a private mix of self-deprecation and banter, finishing each other's sentences, quick to seize on any affection. Luke, 31, the star of the previous night's show, is very much the leader



Above, the counter at Evelyn's Table. Left, Pollock 'kombujime', ichiban dashi, wild garlic. Below, hand-dived scallop, blood orange, shiso



"I'm sort of the Pied Piper," he says, with a grin; Nat, 29, and Theo, 27, seem more than happy to follow his tunes).

In many ways, it becomes clear, as they describe to me their respective journeys to here, that they were fated to the almost monastic discipline and joyful creativity of Evelyn's Table. All three boys were born in Saudi Arabia, where their parents had met while working in a hospital in Jeddah. Their dad, who worked in HR, was from the UK. Their mum, a biomedical scientist, was from the Philippines.

After a few years, the family moved to the UK and settled in a village near Brighton. The four boys – they also have a younger brother, Reuben, who is a fashion designer and photographer – were very tight, always looking out for each other, a built-in gang.

'My violin teacher suggested I go in for a competition that Raymond Blanc was judging'

Their early adventures were all about foraging. "Our mum comes from a family of nine in the Philippines," Luke says. "Her mother had a rice farm, still has a rice farm, and a sugar plantation. So Mum has always had green fingers. She has three different allotments, many greenhouses. She is constantly sending us things to use in the restaurant, gooseberries, whatever. She was always excited about what was in season."

That excitement had a big effect on them as kids. They'd go down to the beach at Shoreham or West Wittering and collect seaweed to cook, or bulging bags of mussels, or catch crabs. They'd walk the lanes blackberrying. "We had seven apple trees in the garden," Luke says, "and every apple would be picked and cored and juiced. Nothing was ever wasted. There was always a crumble on the table."

Theo laughs. "Mum was quite strict with us. We became a kind of production line. We were never allowed to go out until everything was prepped and processed and frozen and stored."

The boys rebelled all the time, of course, but they learned a lot too. "Respect for produce, respect for nature," Nat says. "We didn't go out to eat much, maybe the Harvester on a Sunday."

Their mother hasn't lost her passion for discovery. "I moved back home over lockdown," Luke says, "and showed her

»

IT'S THE OLIVES THAT DON'T MAKE IT THAT TRULY MAKE IT.

At Filippo Berio good simply isn't good enough.
Every year, our tasters sample over 6,000 oils
from all over the Mediterranean,
yet only the very best 6% make it into our bottles.

Only if it meets the exceptionally high standards
of our founder, Filippo Berio, is it worthy
of bearing his name.

Find us at your local supermarket today.

Filippo Berio

His signature. Our promise.



where she could pick caperberries. She just sent us about 10 kilos of them..."

The other formative ingredient in that childhood was their dad's love of mealtimes. "He gets such joy from food," Luke says, "so when I started cooking for the family – as a kid I was forever reading cookery books, watching food shows, taking notes – it gave us this real connection."

Luke was always the driven one. If he hadn't become a chef, he says, he may have had a career as a violinist. It was, ironically, his violin teacher, Andrew Bernardi, strings tutor at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire in south London, who prompted his first big kitchen opportunity. "We were always talking about food at lessons," he says, "and he suggested I go in for this Rotary young chef competition, that Raymond Blanc was judging." Luke was 14. He still remembers his menu for the final – open smoked haddock ravioli, roasted duck with blackberries and a raspberry soufflé. "I came second," he says. "But I wrote to Raymond afterwards and got some work experience in his kitchen at Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons. They held a job open until I finished my A-levels."

Luke worked at the Manoir for six years. First Theo and then Nat gravitated to him, sleeping on his floor. Nat took the more circuitous route. He did a degree in illustration and only started cooking after graduation. Theo went to catering college and worked in restaurants in Sussex. Luke got them both trials at the Manoir, and for the first time they all worked together in the kitchen there; Luke as Blanc's sous chef, Nat and Theo as commis.

They went separate ways for a while. While he was head chef at Ollie Dabbous' eponymous restaurant in 2017, Luke won the title of national young chef of the year and a Roux scholarship that earned him time at the three-Michelin-starred Nihonryori Ryugin in Tokyo. The band of brothers then reunited at Dabbous' new London project Hide, the vast and buzzy oligarch-chic restaurant opposite the Ritz, before setting up here just over two years ago.

The contrast with Hide, with its limousine elevator, could hardly be greater. "I always loved working with Ollie," Luke says, "but I'd got to the point where I wanted to do my own thing." He drew up plans for the intimate kind of space he had in mind. Coincidentally, Zoë and Layo Paskin, owners of London restaurant hotspots the Palomar and the Barbary, got in touch about their ideas for Evelyn's Table and the Blue Posts. After a couple of meetings and a look at the space downstairs,



**Luke is very much the leader.
I'm sort of the Pied Piper,' he says with a grin**

he signed a partnership agreement with them. His brothers, naturally, were a key part of the deal. Their restaurant was due to open in March 2020, but was scuppered by lockdown. Though it has been frustratingly stop-start ever since, there have been high moments: notably the award of a Michelin star at the beginning of this year (and Michelin's young chef of the year for the three of them). The brothers gave themselves a big day out to celebrate: a six-hour lunch at Alain Roux's Waterside Inn at Bray, followed by a couple of bottles of champagne with Raymond Blanc, who has become a kind of second father to them.

That kind of downtime is quite rare though. They have recently employed one sous chef to fill in so one of them can take the occasional night off, but otherwise they are all in. "I think we always knew we could work well together," Theo says. "We can preempt what is going to happen, each other's needs." The rough demarcation, he says, is that "Luke makes the sauces and handles the protein. Nathaniel does the pastry and I deal with garnish and fill in the

The magic number

Three other sibling trios from the world of food

Jyotin, Karam & Sunaina Sethi

The brothers and sister behind the JKS group, the powerhouse behind Gymkhana, Sabor, Lyle's, Bao and Kitchen Table.

Sam, Eddie & James Hart

Hospitality is in the brothers' blood – their parents own the Michelin-starred Hambleton Hall in Rutland. The Hart Group numbers Quo Vadis and Barrafina among its restaurants, with Eddie also having his own place, El Camino, in Mallorca.

Chris, Jeff & David Galvin

Of the longstanding food family, Chris and Jeff are the storied chef-patrons, and David buys produce for their five restaurants in London and Essex.

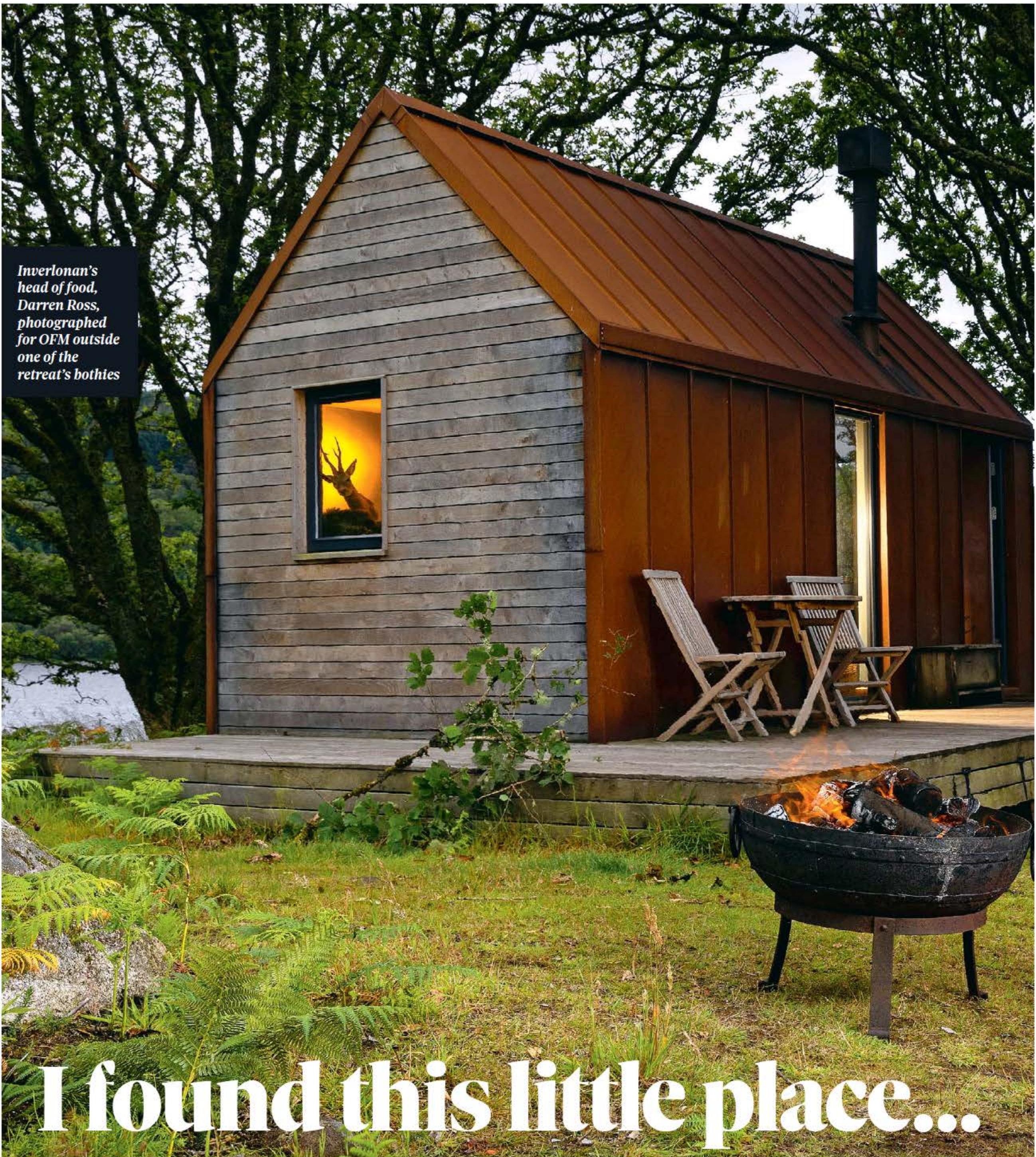
gaps. But we are all able to do every sort of part of the kitchen, so if one of us has a night off, we can still maintain the standard."

Not surprisingly on free days they try to escape each other and have their own circles of friends, though Luke and Theo spend a lot of time fishing together. "We've just started spear fishing and freediving," Theo says. "We are often in Cornwall." They bring home spider crabs and lobsters and sea bass and pollack – though, Luke admits, their spearfishing skills still leave something to be desired.

They are inevitably a little competitive about such off-duty challenges, but one thing they are adamant about is that the open kitchen arrangement leaves no room for sibling tension. They have worked in shouty restaurants but are happy to have replaced that with a kind of hush and a funky background playlist (they all chip in with favourite tracks). Otherwise, Luke insists, there is no place for simmering rivalry. "If something was off, the diners are so close they would feel it straight away," he says. "And anyway we all enjoy the process. We all know every element that gets put on the plate." And with that, two hours before curtain up, they get back to it. **OFM**

Evelyn's Table, The Blue Posts Cellar, 28 Rupert St, London W1D 6DJ; theblueposts.co.uk

Inverlonan's
head of food,
Darren Ross,
photographed
for OFM outside
one of the
retreat's bothies



I found this little place...

*Oysters by a bothy near Oban, West African fish and pickles in Brixton,
red cabbage gazpacho above a jeweller's shop in Staffordshire –
12 top chefs tell us about their favourite new discoveries*



Inverlonan

nr Oban, Argyll & Bute

● Chosen by Pamela Brunton, chef and co-owner, Inver, Cairndow, Argyll & Bute

Inverlonan is a rural retreat with bothies on a cliff edge overlooking Loch Nell. It has started doing dinners in a disused byre, with straw on the floor and tea lights among the brickwork. We went last November when it was freezing cold. They brought us blankets and hot-water bottles. The chef cooked everything – 11 small courses – over a fairly rudimentary fire setup. We had oysters with buttermilk, black garlic and elderberry, and local venison with beetroot, and a lollipop covered in dehydrated redcurrants, all extremely delicious. It certainly doesn't have the luxuries that you come to expect from fine dining restaurants, but it was an exciting, unique experience.

Grace & Savour

Hampton Manor, Solihull, West Midlands

● Chosen by Alex Nietosvuori, chef and co-owner, Hjem, Hexham, Northumberland

Grace & Savour, which opened just a few months ago, uses as much produce as possible from its own garden and farm. The design of the place is incredible – the dining room has big windows that open on to a beautiful walled garden. The chef, David Taylor, worked at Maaemo in Oslo and the food is very Scandinavian-inspired – I had a particularly good dish with raw shrimp. The burnt leek with beef garum and butter sauce was a very clever dish that brought out the best from a simple product. And the deep-fried sourdough starter with aged beef and wild garlic was another highlight. ➤

Interviews

Killian Fox

Photograph

Murdo MacLeod



Paradise London W1

● Chosen by Ravinder Bhogal, co-founder Jikoni, London

Sri Lankan food often gets mistaken for Indian food, but it's so different, and what Paradise does really well is show how uniquely Sri Lankan its dishes are, with colonial influences from Portuguese and Dutch cuisines. The meal was like an unfolding flavour party. I particularly remember the fried long aubergine with jaggery moju, turmeric and chilli. It was so dark and caramelly and the spicing was euphoric, while the fragrant and gentle moju washed the heat away. There is space now for Sri Lankan stories to be told. And Paradise is unapologetically Sri Lankan. It tells a unique immigrant story and eating there is a real education. You feel enriched by the experience.

Upstairs by Tom Shepherd Lichfield, Staffordshire

● Chosen by Gareth Ward, chef-patron, Ynyshir, Wales

Tom Shepherd's dad has a jewellers in Lichfield. There was an



empty space upstairs so he gave it to his son to turn into a restaurant. It really stands out in the town – it feels like you're entering a different world. Shepherd is classically trained (he used to work for Sat Bains and Michael Wignall). He's very much his own chef, cooking what he wants rather than trying to cater for local tastes. One of my favourite courses was the red cabbage gazpacho. And he's got a really nice Thai green curry dessert. It's a good sign that places like this are opening in towns like Lichfield – it wouldn't have happened so easily five or 10 years ago.

Chishuru

London SW9

● Chosen by Shuko Oda, co-founder and executive chef, Koya, London

Chishuru in Brixton Market serves West African cuisine and is run by a female chef, Adejoké Bakare. I



Above, dishes from (clockwise from top) Apricity, Paradise and The Plimsoll, all in London. Left, Upstairs by Tom Shepherd in Lichfield. Right, Adejoké Bakare, photographed for OFM by Amit Lennon, at her restaurant Chishuru

don't know too much about West African food, but whenever I go, it reminds me of Japanese food. Last time, the set lunch started with a savoury bean cake served with pumpkin-seed tapenade and a scotch bonnet sauce. It's quite a kick to start your meal, but wasabi has a similar effect. The main dish was grilled mackerel with a pickle and rice on the side – again so familiar and comforting to me. I've been back many times. A casual and delicious way of eating is really what I appreciate now, rather than menus with lots of courses, and Chishuru does that so well.

Cafe Cecilia

London E8

● Chosen by Erchen Chang, creative director and co-founder, Bao, London

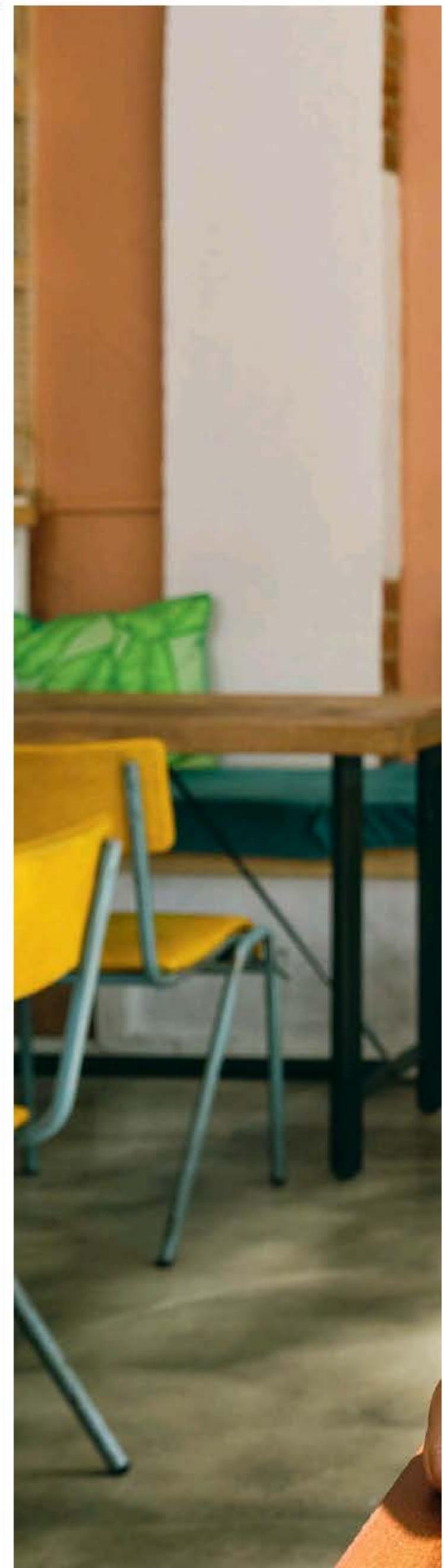
Cafe Cecilia, off Broadway Market, is about simple, no-fuss cooking. The chef, Max Rocha, worked at St John and the River Cafe, and those influences are in his food and in the elegance of the room, but you can feel his Irish heritage coming through too. It's casual but you feel properly looked after. Last time I went, I had monkfish with monk's beard and clams – simple, beautifully cooked. Another time, I had the onglet with chips, which feels like a holiday classic on a hot day, sitting outside overlooking the canal with an icy cocktail. The Guinness bread ice-cream is one of my favourites. Comforting food is what's needed right now, and Cafe Cecilia does it really well.

The Plimsoll

London N1

● Chosen by James Cochran, head chef, 12:51, London

I think the British pub has lost its identity. Everywhere is trying to be a gastropub, and too much money is spent on decor. The Plimsoll is a local tucked away down the back streets of Finsbury Park, with the smoky feel of an old-style pub. There are informal barstools, the decor has a 1960s/70s vibe. Originally, the chefs, Jamie Allan and Ed McIlroy [AKA Four Legs], were at the ➤



'A casual and delicious way of eating – Chishuru does that so well'



Open up your world view



The Guardian Weekly takes you beyond the headlines to give you a deeper understanding of the issues that really matter. Subscribe today and take your time over handpicked articles from the Guardian and Observer, delivered for free wherever you are in the world.



Visit theguardian.com/gw-ofm or scan the QR Code

Get 35% off the cover price

Retail price per issue	Subscription price per issue	You save
£4.95	£3.24	35%

**The
GuardianWeekly**

Subscription rate is a monthly subscription payment of £13.75, or annual rate of £165. Currency will vary outside these regions. For full subscription terms and conditions visit theguardian.com/guardian-weekly-subscription-terms-conditions

Compton Arms in Highbury. The burgers there were absolutely banging, and they've kept them on the menu here. It's classic British pub food – they might have a lasagne, or fish and chips, or a prawn cocktail. It brings back a lot of memories of when I was a child meeting my grandparents down the pub. It's hearty food executed really well in this little hidden gem.

Hern
Chapel Allerton, Leeds
● Chosen by Alisdair Brooke-Taylor,
chef, The Moorcock Inn, Sowerby
Bridge, West Yorkshire

This tiny neighbourhood restaurant on the outskirts of Leeds is a humble place but the skill level is really high. There's just one person cooking and one person at the front, with a four-course set menu at £40. The cooking is modern but often takes inspiration from old recipes, like tomatoes cooked in cream, served with herbs and croutons. Goddamn, it's delicious. I go all the time and I've never had a bad plate, and some of the dishes are pinch-yourself good. You just think: "Why aren't there more places like this?"

Yellowhammer Stockport, Greater Manchester

Yellowhammer is a new bakery, deli and pottery studio in Stockport. It's co-run by Sam Buckley, whose restaurant Where the Light Gets In is upstairs. Everything about Where the Light Gets In is done to such a high level, with a huge amount of thought and care, and the same applies at Yellowhammer. It serves bread, buns and coffee during the day, and wine and small bites at night. The produce is everything: really beautiful vegetables from its nearby growing project, The Landing, regeneratively farmed meat, fish from day boats. And the bread is stunning. Stockport feels



A photograph of a meal on a wooden table. The meal consists of several plates: one with meatballs and a yellow sauce, another with a green salad, a third with a sandwich and butter, and a fourth with a slice of bread. There are also glasses of red wine.

Top, Rab Adams, photographed for OFM by Richard Saker, at his restaurant Hern in Chapel Allerton. Above, small bites at Yellowhammer in Stockport

like it's having a bit of a revival, but really it's not a particularly well-off area, so to open a restaurant there was quite bold.

Apricity
London W1
The website is www.apricty.com

● Chosen by Asma Khan, founder,
Darjeeling Express, London

Chantelle Nicholson's Apricity is female-owned and 75% of the kitchen staff is female. The emphasis is on regionality, on sustainability, on zero waste, but without all the shrill tones and preachiness. The menu prioritises plant-based food, but there is also meat and fish on the menu. We started with something called the wasted dip, made with leftover vegetables. It was both sweet and savoury, every bite was different. I just thought it was so clever, and great value at £2. The asparagus with slow-cooked egg was wonderful and very seasonal, and the beef ribs were fabulous. I usually can't stand lettuce, but the butterhead lettuce salad with miso and crispy kale was really nice. The time has come for chefs to talk about the politics of food, and at Apricity there are discussions of environment and justice and equality, and there's great food and a beautiful, laid-back atmosphere.

Cafe Deco
London WC1

► Chosen by Stosie Madi, chef and co-owner, The Parker's Arms, Newton-in-Bowland, Lancashire

Anna Tobias (*see interview, p37*) opened Cafe Deco just after the first lockdown and I went as soon as I could. There's a familiarity to her cooking that really attracts me. It's very seasonal. It's very underdressed, but it's perfectly dressed. Anna does the classics in a modern way, but does not overfuss. One of my favourite dishes of hers is an egg with mayonnaise piped on top in the very classic French way. She does that in different guises throughout the seasons. I also love when she does cold sliced meats with very autumnal salads – a delicious northern European lunch. Her desserts are not very blousy, but actually the simplicity is beautiful. And she makes delicious pies, and I love anybody who makes a pie.

SlowBurn
London E17

● Chosen by Akwasi Brenya-Mensa, chef-patron, Tatale, London

SlowBurn started as a pop-up when everybody was pivoting in lockdown and doing something different to keep the lights on. It's in a denim factory. When you walk in, you're kind of confused at first because there are mannequins and sewing machines everywhere, but then you go through and the restaurant's at the back. That gives it a real wow factor. It's a vegetable-focused restaurant with meat on the side. I really liked the black bean gyoza taco, and the aubergine chermoula with spiced chickpeas and sheep's ricotta. I spoke very briefly to the chef, Chavdar Todorov. He seems to be drawing influences from various places and from his travels, much in the way that I do. It is doing great food, but in terms of the location, I don't think there are many experiences like that in the whole of London. **OFM**



We're helping more
and more people do their bit.

eonenergy.com

Sam is taking action for climate with solar panels

e.on





Everyone loves toast. But there is toast and... toast. In *Moro Easy*, a new cookbook by Sam and Sam Clark, there are no fewer than 10 recipes for things on toast. Some are straightforward, almost austere: I can't imagine the person who wouldn't be able to rustle up a few slices of their tomato and jamon toast (the secret lies with a grater and just the right amount of garlic). Others are luxuriant: imagine a crisp oval of sourdough topped with a thin tortilla and aioli, or with crab warmed in butter and Oloroso sherry.

Moro Easy is the Clarks' first book since 2014 and it is, at least in part, a result of the pandemic: their London restaurants – Moro in Clerkenwell and Morito in Hackney – suddenly shuttered, the pair found themselves unexpectedly at home with their three

children. "It was extraordinary," says the first Sam (to avoid confusion, I will hereafter refer to her husband as Samuel), "cooking three meals a day for five, rather than however many covers in the restaurant." Some of the ideas that eventually went into *Moro Easy* were old ones, reworked for the home cook. But others were born of this period, when they were cooking off the cuff. "We felt a bit smug," says Samuel. "At the supermarkets, there were long queues. But our local shops had no queues, and they sell everything you could want. We've lived here for 15 years, and I'd never really used the high street before."

At their kitchen table, half of it these days dotted with pots of geraniums, we turn the pages of *Moro Easy*. Samuel alights on a recipe for spiced labneh with sun-dried tomatoes and fennel seeds, about which, it turns out, they both have a couple of things to say. >>

'We're the cooks, we're here to stay'

*Sam and Sam Clark share exclusive recipes from their new cookbook *Moro Easy*. It's an instant classic!*

Interview
Rachel Cooke



Portrait
Pål Hansen

*Sam and
Sam Clark,
photographed for
OFM in
their garden in
north London*



★
**EXCLUSIVE
RECIPES**

First, they tell me, making your own labneh is both easy and a “revelation” (using Greek yoghurt and cream cheese avoids the need for straining). Second, sun-dried tomatoes are due for a comeback. “The backlash was unnecessarily harsh,” says Samuel with a smile. There follows – more page turning – some talk of rice (the Clarks are self-confessed rice snobs), pistachios (the best come from Turkey), chicken livers (why do they make people nervous?) and ice-cream (*Moro Easy* includes a recipe for one flavoured with coffee and cardamom that, involving no churning, takes mere seconds to whizz up).

The Clarks’ first book – *Moro, the Cookbook* – came out in 2001, four years after their influential restaurant, its menu inspired by their travels in north Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, opened in 1997; instantly hailed as a classic by Nigella Lawson and Claudia Roden, it remains much loved. Is it hard to write in its shadow? “It’s good having a bit of distance between the books,” says Sam. “But, though we’re proud of the first one, we’ve never quite been able to understand its success. The other books have recipes that are just as good.”

In the end, they measure themselves only by their own standards: “Within the first two years of Moro opening, we were approached to sell the brand. We just said: no, no, no, we’re here to stay. We’re the cooks, and we like doing that – and we’re still in the kitchen now.”

But what about their relationship? If running a celebrated restaurant for 25 years is a huge achievement, it is surely a miracle that they’ve done so without winding up in the divorce courts. “Well, I got told off the other day, didn’t I?” says Sam. Samuel takes up the story. “She was late, and I had a new chef to settle in, and I was doing a hot section myself, and we had a lot of people booked.”

What happened? Was there an explosive row? Apparently not. “I just worked twice as hard,” says Sam. For the team, some of whom have been at Moro for a long time, this kind of thing usually passes – according to Samuel – as light entertainment: “There can be a slightly comical hissing at one another.” In the end, though, they tend not to let things simmer. Marital stew, it seems, is one dish best removed from the heat as soon as possible.

Below, fish
tagine with
potatoes, peas
and coriander



Fish tagine with potatoes, peas and coriander

The subtle use of mixed spices and preserved lemon gives a distinctive flavour to this Moroccan fish stew.

Serves 4

olive oil 3 tbsp, plus a little extra for drizzling
banana shallots 2, or 1 small red onion, peeled
garlic 2 cloves, peeled
preserved lemon rind 1 heaped tbsp, finely chopped (optional)
ground cumin 1½ heaped tsp
paprika ½ tsp
fresh coriander 2 tbsp, finely chopped, plus a few leaves for garnish
cherry tomatoes 200g
small waxy new potatoes 200g, such as charlotte, jersey or ratte, sliced into ½cm rounds
frozen petit pois or garden peas 200g
firm white fish 4 fillets, such as sea bass, monkfish or cod
lemon 1 slice, to serve

► Directions

Using a hand blender or food processor, blitz everything except the potatoes, peas and fish. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a wide, deep pan with a tight-fitting lid, add the potatoes and put over a medium to high heat. Bring to a simmer, pop the lid on and cook for 5 minutes.

Add the peas and fish, replace the lid and cook for 5–8 minutes, until just cooked through. Remove from the heat, turn the fish and leave to rest for 5 minutes.

Check for seasoning and serve immediately with a drizzle of olive oil, and with the extra coriander and a slice of lemon on top.

Fried potatoes with za'atar, peppers and feta

We love the texture of the soft and salty feta gently melting into the potatoes. You can see how it is a versatile accompaniment to fish and meat dishes. Also delicious with a tomato and basil salad.



Above, fried potatoes, za'atar, peppers and feta
Right, spinach, pine nuts and sultanas

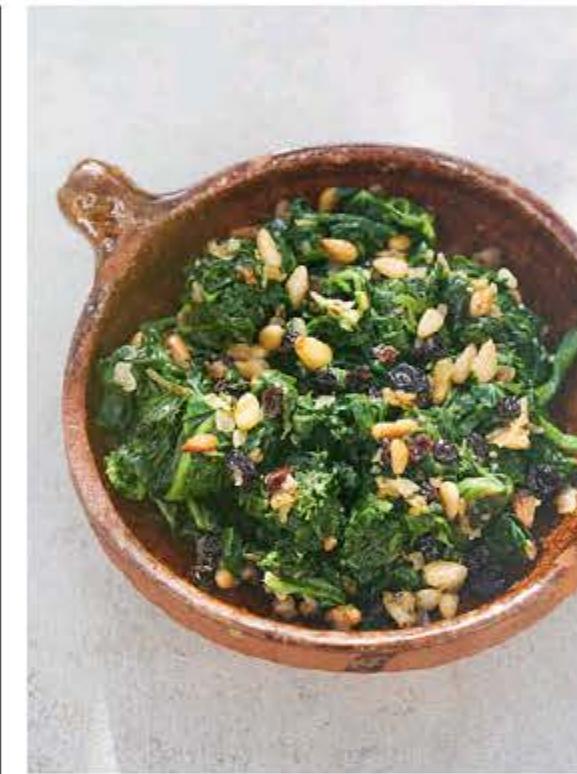
Serves 4

roasting potatoes 1kg, such as maris piper, peeled and cut into quarters or sixths, depending on size
olive oil 2 tbsp
butter 50g
garlic 3 cloves, finely chopped
za'atar 1 heaped tbsp
spring onions 4, white and green parts, thinly sliced
fresh coriander 2 tbsp, chopped
piquillo peppers 150g (or any other roast peppers from a jar), drained and sliced into thin strips
feta 75g, crumbled

► Directions

Boil the potatoes in salted water for 7–10 minutes, until just tender, then drain in a colander and spread out to dry and cool. Rough up the edges of the potatoes with a fork.

Put the olive oil and butter into a large frying pan (30cm) over a medium heat, and when the butter starts to foam, add the garlic and fry gently for a minute until very lightly golden. Add the



It is a versatile accompaniment to fish and meat, and also with a tomato salad

potatoes to the pan and stir well. Season with a little more salt and pepper, then fry gently for 10–15 minutes, turning occasionally and taking care the garlic doesn't burn, until golden and crisp on all sides.

Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the potatoes to a dish. Sprinkle over the za'atar, spring onions, coriander and peppers, and toss gently.

Finally crumble over the feta, toss once more, check for seasoning and serve.

Spinach, pine nuts and sultanas

For a more substantial meal, serve this on toast with a dollop of soft goat's cheese on top to melt into the warm, sweet spinach. This recipe is endlessly compatible.

Serves 4

spinach 1kg, washed and drained
olive oil 4 tbsp
banana shallots 2 (120g), very finely chopped
garlic 1 clove, finely chopped
dried oregano ½ tsp, or 1 tsp finely chopped fresh oregano
pine nuts 5 tbsp, lightly toasted
sultanas 5 tbsp
soft goat's cheese 100–150g (optional)
toast (optional)

► Directions

Wilt the washed spinach in a wide dry pan (30cm) in two to three batches over a medium heat. When soft, transfer to a colander to drain and cool. Squeeze out any excess water and roughly chop.

Rinse the pan quickly, then return to the heat and add the olive oil. Once hot, add the shallots, garlic, oregano and a pinch of salt. Fry for 8–10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and caramelised. Add the pine nuts and sultanas, then fry for a minute. Add the spinach, stir to warm through.

Check for seasoning and serve, either as it is or on toast with some goat's cheese.



Above, pepper, anchovy and chopped egg

Pepper, anchovy and chopped egg

The marriage of the sweet peppers, salty anchovies and creamy egg make this toast a visual and taste sensation.

Serves 4

roasted piquillo peppers 6-8, from a jar, or 2 romano peppers (180g), roasted until soft, then peeled and deseeded
red wine vinegar ½ tbsp, plus a pinch of sugar if not sweet
extra virgin olive oil 4 tbsp
sourdough bread 8 slices or 4 slices ciabatta (if ciabatta, use slices 8cm wide, cut in half horizontally)
garlic ½ clove
egg 1 organic or free-range, hard-boiled and finely chopped
best-quality anchovy fillets in olive oil 8 (we use Ortiz)
flat-leaf parsley 2 tbsp, finely chopped

► Directions

Cut the peppers into strips and mix with the vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper.

Toasting the bread, brush the garlic over the hot toast, then spoon the peppers on top, followed by the chopped egg and anchovy fillets. Finish with the chopped parsley.

Sweet peppers, salty anchovies and creamy egg make this a taste sensation

Roast chicken, wild rice, mushrooms and herbs

The addition of turmeric brightens the overall look of this recipe.

Serves 4

olive oil 2 tbsp
butter 25g
leeks 2, white part only, cut in half lengthways and thinly sliced
bay leaves 2
mixed mushrooms 400g (field, wild and oyster), sliced
mixed wild and basmati rice 200g
vegetable or chicken stock 400ml
organic chicken breasts 4, skin removed
Greek yoghurt 200g, seasoned with ½ **garlic** clove crushed with salt and 1 level tsp **turmeric**
tarragon, dill, parsley and basil
3 tbsp each, chopped
Aleppo chilli flakes ½ tsp

► Directions

Preheat the oven to 180C fan/gas mark 6.

Place a large (30cm) heavy ovenproof casserole pan with a tight-fitting lid over a medium heat, and add the oil and butter. When the butter begins to foam, add the leeks and bay leaves and a good pinch of salt, and fry for 10 minutes or until the leeks are soft and sweet, stirring occasionally.

Add the mushrooms and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are soft and their liquid has almost evaporated (about 5 minutes). Stir in the rice and the stock and bring to a gentle simmer.

Lay the chicken on top, season with salt and pepper and cover with the lid. Place in the oven for 20 minutes, then remove the lid and continue cooking for another 5-10 minutes, until the rice is cooked and the chicken is cooked through (juices run clear).

Remove from the oven and lift out the chicken to rest for a couple of minutes. Stir the yoghurt mixture and ⅓ of the sweet herbs into the rice. Slice the chicken and serve with the rest of the herbs on top and sprinkled with chilli flakes.





Chocolate almond cake

My friend Sara Fanelli baked this gluten-free cake for us. We love it, especially with a little sea salt sprinkled on top.

Makes 1 cake, serving 8-10 slices

dark chocolate 175g, broken into chunks
unsalted butter 175g, plus extra for greasing
caster sugar 175g
ground almonds 175g
free-range or organic eggs 4, separated
sea salt

► **Directions**

Preheat the oven to 140C fan/gas mark 3.

Generously grease a 23cm cake tin with butter and line the base with baking paper.

Put the chunks of chocolate into a bain-marie (a heatproof bowl set over barely simmering water). Once melted, remove from the heat and stir in the butter to melt. Stir in the caster

sugar, ground almonds and a small pinch of sea salt.

Set aside to cool slightly. Meanwhile, whisk the egg whites to soft, fluffy peaks.

Once the chocolate mixture has cooled slightly, stir in the egg yolks. Using a metal spoon, stir in one heaped spoonful of the whisked egg whites. Once this spoonful is fully incorporated, gently fold in the remaining egg whites.

Gently pour the batter into the prepared cake tin and lightly sprinkle the top with flaky sea salt.

Bake for 40-45 minutes, until the top is crackled and the cake feels slightly springy to the touch.

Allow to cool in the tin before removing and placing on a wire rack. Cut into slices to serve. **OFM**

Recipes from Moro Easy by Samantha Clark & Samuel Clark (Ebury Publishing, £30). To order a copy for £26.10 go to guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply



Left, roast chicken, wild rice, mushrooms and herbs.
 Right, chocolate almond cake



Words
Tony Naylor

Take me to the River

To mark 35 years of the River Cafe, we talk to three chef alumni about how the restaurant shaped their lives – and which ingredients define their time there

When we hire people,” says Joe Trivelli, executive head chef at the River Cafe, “I’m thinking, ‘Will they be good, and stay for a long time?’ I’m not thinking about what they’re going to do afterwards.” The restaurant, which celebrates its 35th anniversary next month, is not, stresses its other executive head chef, Sian Wyn Owen, a “fancy cooking school”.

The River Cafe’s kitchen needs team players willing to work hard while absorbing knowledge, not chefs in a rush to tick a box on their CV and move on to their own head chef roles.

Famous for its rigorously seasonal

Italian cooking, the restaurant is also renowned as an incubator of highly influential talent. Its founders, Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers, fostered the development of Jamie Oliver, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Theo Randall, Stevie Parle, and Sam and Sam Clark of Moro. Today, it is Tomos Parry of Brat, Max Rocha at Café Cecilia or Yohei Furuhashi at Toklas who are carrying elements of its ethos out into the world.

That conveyor belt of talent may be described as an unforeseen byproduct of the environment Gray, who died in 2010, and Rogers, still very much in charge, created together. The kitchen currently has a roughly 50:50 male-female split, and each week chefs work four single shifts (9am to 5pm or 3pm to 11pm) and at most one double shift. Working parents are offered flexible hours, and the 150 staff can apply for bursaries from the Rose Gray Foundation for their personal and professional development.

Wyn Owen is wary of portraying the River Cafe as a “sickly, happy family”, saying: “it’s a stressful working environment meeting two non-negotiable deadlines a day – lunch and dinner.” In summer, the kitchen can do 200 covers at lunch on a Monday, but its chefs tend to stay for several years. Wyn Owen, 50, and Trivelli, 48, have both been there for more than 20 years. Stay long enough, explains Wyn Owen, and, “by osmosis, in real time”, chefs learn to “properly cook”.

Trivelli and Wyn Owen are disappointed when talented alumni leave the industry, often to become private chefs. “It’s sad they’ve vanished inside someone’s house to make scrambled eggs,” says Wyn Owen. “You want them to carry on the mantle.”

But a notable number of ex-River Cafe chefs do exactly that: go on to lead highly rated kitchens.

Co-founder of the River Cafe, Ruth Rogers, centre, with executive head chefs, Sian Wyn Owen and Joe Trivelli, 2017



SARAH LEE

Anna Tobias,
photographed by
Phil Fisk for OFM
at Cafe Deco in
London





Key ingredient #1

'Wedges of Amalfi lemons of the most incredible quality served with every fish dish – that's the aesthetic'

ANNA TOBIAS

Chef-owner, Cafe Deco, London; she worked at the River Cafe from 2010 to 2013

"When I joined the River Cafe I was 23 and had only been cooking for 18 months. I was very fresh and not entirely sure I wanted to cook any more. I was in a personally difficult moment and my life could have gone another way. But I thought I'd try one more place: I only applied to the River Cafe, got the job and luckily stayed on the cooking path. It was the River Cafe or rethink.

From an employee perspective, there was a level of glamour that felt enticing – big team, huge open kitchen, everyone knew the books, Jamie Oliver had come out of there.

In the morning, everyone does raw prep, filleting fish and butchery. That was a learning curve. Scaling eight sea bass each day is grim, but you get really good at it. More established chefs teach the newcomers with energy, enthusiasm and in detail. After that, I felt confident in my skills to tutor »



people. At Cafe Deco, that's a large part of my job. I love teaching.

The cooking processes behind food described as 'simple' – in essence, enjoying ingredients without mucking about with them – aren't necessarily simple, and those processes must be perfect. That's the point of going to a restaurant. You get to enjoy a peeled plum cherry tomato that you would never bother peeling at home.

Rose had died two or three weeks before I joined and, when learning dishes from other chefs, instructions would often be prefaced with, 'Rose used to say', 'Rose would do this', or 'Rose would hate that'. She was very much there. There was real togetherness and an atmosphere of cooking well, for Ruthie, but keeping Rose's standards, too.

Cooking simply and seasonally requires great care in produce quality. At the River Cafe, tasting the first summer basil, porcini or cherries together, these were all incredibly exciting moments. I work with tiny farms who can only deliver certain amounts at Cafe Deco, particularly on the veg side. If the produce isn't incredible the food will, at best, be average to good-ish.

Early on, I remember the first borlotti beans coming in. Ruthie cooked them in the oven and put on a dish of borlotti, good oil and chopped parsley. That was it. That's bold cooking with strong belief in a delicious product. It requires way more confidence than cooking with a million flourishes on a plate.

The beauty of the River Cafe is that people stay a long time. As an ambitious chef, that's also a problem. You hit a glass ceiling where you're banking on someone leaving to get more responsibility. I wanted to learn new skills: write menus, how to cost, have more of a creative voice. I went to Rochelle Canteen and, after a year, was made head chef.

I think of Cafe Deco's menu as a brainchild of all my former bosses and my own style. My gnudi with good, new season olive oil or my pappa al pomodoro soup aren't carbon copies, but I take inspiration from the River Cafe. Why wouldn't I bring some of that learning into my own cooking?"



AVINASH SHASHIDHARA

Head chef, Pahli Hill Bandra Bhai, London; he worked at the River Cafe from 2008 to 2018

"In Bangalore, I worked at Italia, where Antonio Carluccio was a consultant. He and Priya Paul [the chair of Park Hotels India, where Shashidhara trained as a chef] would bring in cookbooks, including the blue *River Cafe* and *Easy*, and say, 'This is the kind of food we want.' I'd look at them thinking, 'This

place must be amazing,' but I never thought I'd work there.

In 2005, I moved to the UK (there was a huge chef shortage in Britain and agencies were recruiting in India) and in 2006 got a job at the Old Bridge Hotel in Huntingdon. The owner, John Hoskins, was friends with Rose Gray's son, Ossie [a former River Cafe general manager], and John sent us for lunch at the River Cafe. I loved it.

Walking along the banks of the Thames and seeing the Harrod's Furniture Depository in Barnes was like walking through the cookbooks. The food was so simple, so seasonal,



nothing like I'd cooked or eaten. My palate wasn't complex and I remember the olive oil tasted slightly unpleasant to me, bitter and peppery. Having tried the recipe, I had the chocolate nemesis for dessert and the quality was completely different.

I arrived at the restaurant in 2008 as a junior chef, starting at the bottom on cold starters and desserts, as everybody does. I trained in French fine dining and had to unlearn everything. The River Cafe way meant elegant but rustic. Sian [Wyn Owen] would say, 'Babes, imagine you're at home, helping yourself, that's how I

want you to plate food.' It was a huge change in how I looked at food.

It works in a fascinating way which is never repetitive. One head chef starts at 9am, another at 3pm, and each writes that day's lunch and dinner menu. Chefs get a section to work on each service, which changes daily, and over months you move around to, say, hot starters, pasta, the wood-fired oven.

At 10.30am, you also get a jobs list where you're making risotto or roasting veal for different sections. So every day you're learning about new dishes and ingredients. Training

Avinash Shashidhara, photographed by Amit Lennon for OFM at Pahli Hill Bhanda Bhai in London

is intense. Even making salsa verde, somebody would show me start to finish. Next time, you do it with another chef. Third time on your own, but with senior chefs checking it. There is no scope for inconsistency.

Rose and Ruthie were like mothers to me. They could be harsh critics but if you messed up you didn't get shouted at. You didn't feel personally attacked. They were always willing to show you what you'd done wrong. This created high standards. People wanted to do their best but they weren't scared to make mistakes.

I came out of the River Cafe a calmer chef. Now I'm heading a kitchen, managing 10 chefs, some in their 50s. If something isn't good enough, I tell people on a professional basis and, importantly, show them how to do it. The River Cafe changed the way I handle people.

I had a good work-life balance there. The annual wine and olive oil trips to Italy are a massive perk. I went on 10. You're taken to hidden restaurants in Tuscany or feasts with producers' families to understand the River Cafe ethos. You're in the bubble, part of the family. Why would we leave?

Eventually, I needed my own identity. After 10 years, you're certainly confident you can set up your own restaurant. The River Cafe's approach of letting ingredients shine is visible at Pahli Hill. I don't change my menu daily, but I'm in constant touch with my suppliers and use exciting seasonal produce as it comes in: nettles, spring lamb, girolles. I see similarities in Italian and Indian food culture – everything revolves around family and seasonality.

Key ingredient #2

'As a child, I'd go to market with Dad. And that's how we cooked vegetables at the River Cafe – simple, seasonal'



The Guardian Feast collection

Discover our range of Guardian Feast gifts, including fine-bone china mugs, special edition aprons and stylish Feast folders, perfect for storing your favourite recipes from the Guardian's weekly cookbook

Exclusively
at the
Guardian
Bookshop



From
£35



£12

Support the Guardian with everything you buy
Order now at guardianbookshop.com/feast
or call 020 3176 3837

The
Guardian
Bookshop

PEGS QUINN

Chef-owner, Sonny Stores, Bristol; he worked at the River Cafe from 2014 to 2018

"I'd applied for jobs at three places in London: Moro, Barrafina and the River Cafe. The first interview I got was at the River Cafe. I started my trial week the next day and then got the job.

I was nervous going in. I hadn't eaten there but the restaurant was always talked about in other kitchens because of the cookbooks and its influence. It's a Michelin-starred restaurant serving relaxed food, and there aren't loads of those. Plus, it's a big restaurant: 10 chefs on a busy shift, the biggest kitchen I've worked in.

The amount of time you're in the kitchen was really manageable. There was space and time for the staff to teach you in depth, while I was dealing with the best produce I've ever seen. A senior or head chef would always be around to show you a specific dish. You might get the cookbook out and read the recipe while working together, so you understood how and why it's cooked that way.

Joe [Trivelli] taught me how to make tomato sauce; Sian [Wyn Owen] is a wizard with artichokes; I learned how to cook sweetbreads with Danny [Bohan, the restaurant's head chef]. We do that now at Sonny Stores. I've sent staff on stages to the River Cafe or to Anna [Tobias] at Cafe Deco. We break lambs down with our local butcher – learning from people who know.

We say Sonny Stores is Italian-inspired. We're not as strict as the River Cafe and we have a much smaller team of three chefs. Within that, we work with the same ethos. It's a changing, seasonal menu, using the best produce we can get, cooking in a simple way and not cutting corners. There aren't exact translations of River Cafe dishes on the menu, but there are similarities in flavour combinations or River Cafe-inspired dishes made with different cuts. There's regularly a pork tonnato dish on, which is done with veal at the River Cafe.

Keeping staff happy and maintaining a constant team is something I've



Pegs Quinn,
photographed by
Adrian Sherratt
for OFM at Sonny
Stores in Bristol

taken from the River Cafe. They run a civilised kitchen. No swearing. No shouting. What Sian, Joe and Ruthie do, getting brilliant food out without it being a place where people get berated, there's a skill in that.

Everybody sits down together around 4pm for a staff meal at the River Cafe, outside if the weather is good. That time-out is massively important and the staff food was mindblowing: sea bass or monkfish that hadn't been used in the restaurant, fresh pastas and raviolis. We eat

Key ingredient #3

'It was the first place I got my hands on olive oil that could really lift a tomato salad'



The last word

Rachel Cooke

I've started having people round to eat again and have learned this: perfect is the enemy of good

E-mail newsletters aren't really my thing. I'm overwhelmed enough by the thought of all I desperately want, and need, to read - I was going to say before I die, but let us not be too melodramatic - without adding to the pile. But I do like to see Oliver Burkeman's *The Imperfectionist* land in my inbox every month, a missive that has been known to work on me as a cool palm might work on a fevered brow. And it's to him, the thinking person's (non) self-help guru, that I owe the idea for this column, which has to do with perfection in the kitchen, and how we might best liberate ourselves from its tense-making grasp.

Like most people, entertaining-wise, I've struggled to get back into the groove post-lockdowns. Having lost the habit of having friends over, even the idea of doing so is exhausting now: the planning, the shopping, the cooking. Sometimes, I get as far as drawing up a list of names, and looking in my diary for a date. But like icing that refuses to set, things never get ... concrete. Thoughts whirl, as if in a food processor. Will everyone be disappointed if I serve pasta? Will they consider my tomato sauce infra dig? And what about the pudding? Are memories long enough that people will think: "Oh God, not pavlova again?" I picture the oven, and wonder whether it should be deep cleaned. I examine the kitchen light, and consider how fast it might be fixed. On and on it goes, and so another weekend flips by.

What to do about this? In a recent edition of *The Imperfectionist*, Burkeman alerted his readers to "scruffy hospitality": a term coined in 2014 by, of all people, an Anglican priest called Jack



No one will look under your fridge for crumbs: a Tunnock's wafer is fine for dessert

King. What is scruffy hospitality? For a moment, I pictured Pig Pen in *Peanuts*, trailing a cloud of dust. But, no. Scruffy hospitality is, in essence, a welcome that involves no fuss.

It prioritises people and jokes, warmth and connection, over performance and whatever it is you usually serve with drinks (salt and vinegar crisps from now on!). It is impulsive, reflexive and generous, and in the end it will make everyone very happy, and no one more so than you, the host. To sum up: don't worry if things aren't perfect. The best is the enemy of the good. You are not starring in *MasterChef*, and Greg Wallace is not (thank God) among your friends.

Something about this advice hit home for me, and in recent days I've

acted on it more than once. J came for supper, and I gave her pasta, and she liked it. G happily stayed on after the final of the women's Euros, and ate two portions of the previous night's chickpeas (she's a vegetarian; we were having roast chicken). S came for a drink that turned into a long and slightly tipsy dinner, food I'd cooked for two feeding three with perfect ease. Spontaneity! It makes life so much better: richer, fuller, less costive and clenched. King and, by extension, Burkeman are absolutely right: no one is going to look under your fridge for crumbs; a meal cooked by another hand is (with certain dishonourable exceptions) nearly always delicious; ice-cream or a Tunnock's caramel wafer will do perfectly well for pudding.

Now I've started this, I can't stop. Or at any rate, I don't feel like stopping. I'm dying to see people - 'What about tonight? Is tonight good?' - and I'm hell bent on making sure that, when I do, things are pared down. Yesterday, for instance, I was looking through a new favourite cookbook, *Notes From a Small Kitchen Island* by Debora Robertson, in search of ideas for something chic to give people with drinks (OK, I admit it: I'm not yet quite scruffy enough for crisps). A recipe appeared before me for gruyere and anchovy puffs, which sounded right up my strasse, until I realised it involved making bechamel. Sigh. I turned a few more pages. Ah, this was more like it. Anchovy butter. A cinch! I pictured a wooden tray. On it was a bowl of this gorgeously umami butter, another of radishes, and one of my granny's bone-handled knives. Perfect, but not - if you see what I mean - too perfect. **OFM**
@MsRachelCooke

Next month

In the next Observer Food Monthly

The ultimate fishing trip to Cornwall, must-have recipes from Jamaica and the pleasures of eating with your hands
Free with the Observer on 18 September



OFM King's Place, 90 York Way, London N19GU. T: 020 3353 2000, food.monthly@observer.co.uk. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter @Obsfood
Editor Allan Jenkins Deputy editor Gareth Grundy Design director Lynsey Irvine
Deputy design director Paul Reed Production editor Campbell Stevenson
Deputy production editor Lindsey McWhinnie Picture editor Michael Whitaker
Contributors Ersoy Emin, Molly Tait-Hyland, Paul Tansley Advertising manager
James Attwater Colour Reproduction GNM Imaging. Printed at Walstead
Bicester, Chaucer Business Park, Launton Road, Bicester, OX26 4QZ

ALAMY

Season 3



Comfort Eating *with Grace Dent*

Supported by

Cocado

Help yourself to thirds



You might not realise it, but food can reveal a lot about your story ... and your favourite celebs' stories too.

Join the Guardian's restaurant critic and Comfort Eating host Grace Dent with celebrity guests (including James May, Self Esteem and Big Zuu), as she throws the cupboard doors wide open on friendship, family - and the foods that have seen them through it all.

Apple Podcasts

Google Podcasts

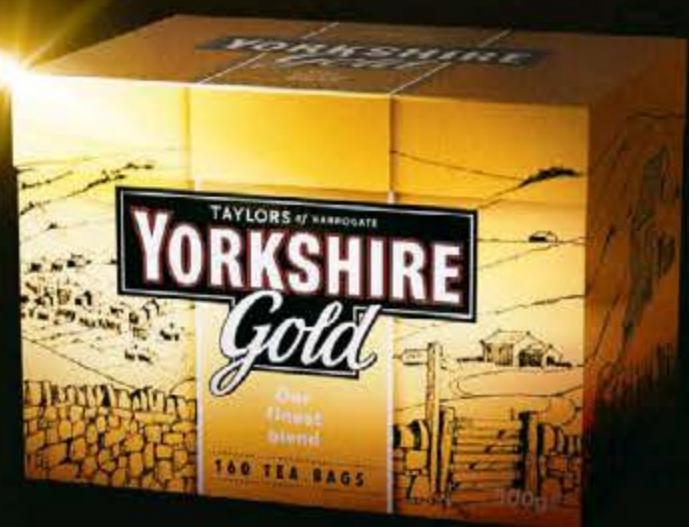
Spotify

Listen on
amazon music

Listen wherever you get your podcasts



Yorkshire Tea's
most dazzling brew



**DOWNLOAD MORE
MAGAZINES AT
[HTTPS://FREEMAGAZINES.TOP](https://freemagazines.top)**